

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN HANDLING THE READING DIFFICULTIES
OF STUDENTS AT SVELUGU SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**



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OF STUDENTS AT SAVELUGU SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL**



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**of the requirement for the award of the degree of
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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Iddrisu Ibrahim Pati, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and that it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE: 

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR. ALBERT AGBESI WORNYO

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

DEDICATION

To Awabu Mahama (my mother), to Iddrisu Baba Zambanga (my father), to Adam Latifa (my Wife) and finally my children Abdul-Baari and Abdul- Baaki.



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ABSTRACT

Some learners at high school tend to have reading difficulties and teachers are confronted with the duty of helping them to overcome their reading difficulties. This study investigated the role of teachers in dealing with reading difficulties among students of Savelugu Senior High School. The study is a qualitative research which employed a case study design. The target population was all the English language teachers of the school. Using purposive sampling technique, eight (8) teachers within the school were involved in the study. Semi structured interview guide and focus group discussions were used to collect data for the study. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The study revealed that the teachers played motivating and facilitating roles to help their students who are struggling with reading to overcome the challenges they face. Amongst others, the study recommended that parental involvement in children's academic development is of utmost importance, because it contributes to a sense of purpose and relevance. If parents and teachers are aware of learners with reading difficulties they can help them earlier enough to overcome their reading problems.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

One issue that has always dominated and captured the attention of policy makers all over the world is education. It is indeed a major criterion or yard stick use by electorates to measure and assess the success or otherwise of governments. This phenomenon has undoubtedly necessary because of the crucial role education plays in the overall wellbeing and development of nations. The World Bank (1980) for instance observed that education is a central element in national development. Shiundu and Omulando (1992) also intimated that education provides men and women with a vocational training that will enable them to be self-reliant. Schultz (1961) also asserts in his article, *Investment in Human Capital*, that education is one of the major activities that increase human capital, which is tightly linked to ones' earnings and the growth of countries economy.

The educational system in Ghana has had a checkered history from the colonial era to the post-colonial era. Most of the issues and evolutions have swung from structure, curriculum, language of instruction, to duration of study. Currently, Ghana's educational system comprises; Pre School, Primary School, Junior High School, Senior High School and Tertiary. The Pre School spans a period of two years and the Primary School spans a period of six years. Both Junior High School and the Senior High School span a period of three years and Tertiary Education lasts for a period of four years. The end of the Junior High School is marked by the Basic Education Certificate Examination (an exams organized by the West Africa Examination Council) which is written by all qualified students from both Public and Private schools all over the country. Successful candidates then proceed to the Senior High School and later write

the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Schools in the country are owned and run by either government or other private individuals. However, all these schools are under the direct control of the Ministry of Education with the Ghana Education Service as the designated regulator of all schools in the country.

One key factor that enables individuals to make progress in the educational system is learners' ability to read and make meaning of what they read. Reading is therefore crucial to the success of education at all levels. A learner's level of reading proficiency determines the achievement that the learner is able to make in educational progress and subsequently the level of the educational ladder that the learners is likely to attain in life.

Reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader, the text and the context of the reading situation. Reading process involves visual motor skills and perception of the symbols by the brain. It is generally broken down into two components: reading the words, or decoding and understanding what is read, or comprehension (Cooper, Warnoke & Shipman, 1988; Samuels, 1988).

Furthermore, according to Manzo and Manzo (1993) reading is the act of simultaneously reading the lines, reading between the lines, and reading beyond the lines. Hence 'reading the line' is the process of decoding the words in order to reconstruct the author's basic message. Reading between the lines is the process of making inferences in order to reconstruct the author's implied messages. This requires an understanding of the integral logic of facts presented as well as an understanding of connotative and figurative language. 'Reading beyond the lines' is the process of judging the significance of the author's message and constructively applying it to other areas of knowledge and experience.

A great number of students without sufficient vocabulary knowledge or effective learning strategies mostly face reading comprehension difficulties (Nor & Rashid, 2018). They mostly encounter a series of continued failure during their studies due to bad experiences they had from the beginning (Hart & Risley, 2003). This connection seems logical since students need high level of vocabulary in order to comprehend reading materials. Various studies have pointed out that the degree of learners' vocabulary knowledge, prior knowledge, and grammatical knowledge are some of the significant factors that influence reading comprehension (Koda, 2007). Nergis (2013) posited that deepness of vocabulary knowledge, syntactic consciousness and metacognitive recognition are some of the important factors that influence reading comprehension.

In addition, Shiotsu, and Weir (2007) stated that the learner's level of syntactic knowledge plays a role in their understanding of reading materials. In other words, learners with insufficient knowledge might not be able to achieve a higher level of reading ability. Therefore, students need syntactic knowledge to integrate their background knowledge and word meaning (Koda, 2005).

Teachers and parents, as well as society in general share a common concern about individuals who do not learn to read. All teachers have the responsibility of understanding and helping their failing and frustrated students. Elementary classroom teachers, reading teachers, special education teachers and secondary school teachers need some knowledge about the assessment and treatment of reading difficulties (Richet, List & Lerner, 1989).

According to Kirigia (1991), a large number of junior high school graduates lack sufficient knowledge in English reading comprehension and also have difficulty

comprehending English words. Furthermore, when they are promoted to secondary school level, such students meet teachers who may not be ready to teach reading due to the negative attitude of teachers of English. They believe that teaching reading should be done at the primary level by primary school teachers. This is erroneous and a wrong attitude on the part of some teachers at the senior high school level because reading instruction is needed by learners at all levels of the educational ladder.

Again, in most district secondary schools in Ghana and especially the northern region, library resources are not well-established. The available reading materials and class readers are often ignored due to the wrong attitude of teachers towards the teaching reading. Finally, the concern for students to pass the WASSCE exams, makes the teachers forego teaching reading which in turn affects the performance of students in all the other examinable subjects. Therefore, the researcher sought to identify and establish the roles that teachers play in handling students with reading difficulties at Savelugu Senior High School.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The role of education in equipping students with the requisite knowledge, skills and values cannot be overemphasized and as reported by Keck (2009) “The relative decline of education is untenable for an economy, unsustainable for democracy, and unacceptable for children, and the world cannot afford to let it continue” (p. 1).

However in Ghana’s educational system, a number of students, for unexplained reasons, are unable to use reading as a tool for learning, getting new information, ideas, attitudes, and values from primary school upwards. Even after they have been taught, it is quite unfortunate that a large number of them are unable to read efficiently at higher class levels (Lerner, 2006).

By the end of primary school, a student should be reading proficiently to succeed in junior and senior high schools. During pre-school, children learn the building blocks of reading including phonological and phonemic awareness, sight words, letters of the alphabet, and basic vocabulary. Primary school pupils use these concepts in order to learn how to read.

According to researchers at Yale University, students who have difficulties in reading in preschool, will continue to struggle in reading in high school (Casey, 2010). “Students with relatively low literacy achievement tend to have more behavioral and social problems in subsequent grades and higher rates of retention in grade” (p.12)

Individual earning potential, global competitiveness, and general productivity can be affected when children have low achievement in reading (Casey, 2010). Action must be implemented to help students who have not mastered the art of reading by the time third grade has been finished.

Casey (2010, p.12) presents two statistics that should influence the educational system. The first one is that “One in six children who are not reading proficiently in primary school fails to graduate from high school on time, four times the rate for children with proficient primary school reading skills.” Second, “Children who have lived in poverty and are not reading proficiently in primary school are about three times more likely to dropout or fail to graduate from high school than those who have never been poor.”

In addition to these, there is also a growing phenomenon where there are students who do not fully master the building blocks of reading when presented in kindergarten through primary school. Some of these students manage to get to the senior high school

level where they still need to be guided to grasp the reading requirements of the senior high school level. It is therefore important for educators to find the best teaching strategies to meet the needs of the students who are not proficient in reading. Teachers and educators must research the best strategies to meet the needs of the struggling readers in order to direct them in the way of success, graduation, and global readiness.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles that teachers play in handling students with reading difficulties in Savelugu Senior High School.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to;

1. Assess the role that teachers play in guiding learners to read in Savelugu Senior high School.
2. Examine the reading activities that help students of Savelugu Senior High School with reading difficulties to overcome their difficulties.
3. Assess the type of teaching strategies teachers at Savelugu Senior High School employ to address the needs of students who have reading difficulties.

1.5 Research Question

To enable the study to be well guided, the under listed research questions were formulated:

1. What role do teachers play in aiding students with reading difficulties in Savelugu Senior High School learn?
2. What kind of reading activities motivate students with reading difficulties?
3. What are the types of teaching strategies used by Savelugu Senior High School teachers in managing students with reading disabilities?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is important for a number of reasons. The study is very significant since it will unfold the causes and solutions to the problem of reading. The study will provide means of finding reasonable solution to reading disability. The result will further enable teachers to be aware of factors that lead to poor performance of pupils in reading English language and an effective way of solving it. It may guide English tutors to select reading activities that motivate learners. Besides, it will add to existing knowledge on poor academic performance in Northern Ghana by serving as a source of information or reference for researchers who may want to do further study in that aspect of school operation.

1.7 Delimitation

The study centered on only Savelugu Senior High School even though there are several schools in the district. This meant that the results would not be generalized to all schools or other settings.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters as follows: Chapter one (1) discusses the background of the research, highlighting the research problems, research objectives, and significance of the research. Chapter two (2) discusses a review of related literature on reading difficulties. Theories as well as literature related to the study were discussed in this chapter. Chapter three (3) describes the methodology that was used for the research. The methodology describes the data collection method, analysis techniques and statistics used to analyse the study. Chapter four (4) presents the analysis of data collected in respect of the objectives set for the study. Chapter five (5) concludes the chapters and it presents the research conclusions, limitations of the research, and it provides recommendations and implications for further research.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the overall introduction of the study. The chapter started with a description of the background of the study, then the statement of the problem was discussed. The various research objectives were drawn up and the corresponding research questions were written. The significance of the study was clearly outlined and finally the organization of the study was stated.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with literature related to the study. For this purpose, two categories of literature are reviewed: theoretical framework and empirical studies. The review covers areas such as the concept of reading difficulties, the concept of reading comprehension, reading and academic performance, school-related factors that cause reading difficulties and their effect on teaching and learning, teacher-related factors that causes reading difficulties and its effect on teaching and learning: Student-related factors that cause reading difficulties and their effect on teaching and learning, parent-related factors that cause reading difficulties and their effect on teaching and learning .

2.1 Theoretical Context of the Study

The research is within the broad tradition of constructivism. Constructivism is a synthesis of multiple theories diffused into one form. A major influence on the rise of constructivism has been theory and research in human development, especially the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. Constructivism may be defined as an epistemological view which sees the learner as an active participant in teaching and learning process (Entwistle, 2012). Learning takes place when new information is built into and added onto an individual's current structure of knowledge, understanding and skills. We learn best when we actively construct our own understanding. It is within four areas that all learning, in particular school learning, can be placed. We learn factual information; we learn to understand new ideas; we learn skills, both mental and physical; and we learn about, and develop, new attitudes to our environment (Pritchard, 2009).

The learner comes into the learning situation with prior knowledge on the subject matter. It is based on this prior knowledge that the learner interprets the new situation presented. This means that the construction of new knowledge is strongly influenced by prior knowledge. It is also a process where motivation and interest in the subject matter may enhance or hinder such construction to take place. The new knowledge gained may be a replacement, addition, or modification of extant knowledge (Schunk, 2012).

The construction of new knowledge takes place at an existing cultural context such as geographical location, religion, social and economic class. It is within the constructivist framework to say that one should pay attention to attitudes, experiences and interests in a teaching situation (Pritchard, 2009). The study framework, therefore, could be seen to be organized on the principle that individual learners build or construct their own meaning of new information on the basis of their existing knowledge and that what a person brings to the learning environment matters.

Each learner brings experiences that affect his or her view of the world and his or her ability to accept other views grounded in science. In this way, science education can be contextualized and linked to the life world experiences of learners. The new experiences are used by the learner to build new meaning. This knowledge construction is shaped through social interactions with members of the community. Thus making learning meaningful for the learner, one has to take cognizance of the social and cultural environments of the child. With recognition of the need for the child's environment in the classroom, school learning will largely be informed by the interaction between the conceptual domains of the community and school.

Social constructivist theorizes that learners construct meaning through interactions with others, with materials, and by observation and exploration of events. Constructivists hold the view that learners' understanding of school mathematics, to a large extent, is conditioned by their present commonsense experiences. This understanding, in turn is shaped by their prior encounters with various phenomena, even though their interpretations of such encounters may or may not be scientifically valid (Schunk, 2012). Hence, it is important that the curriculum should be shaped to reflect pupils' learning experiences in the affective domain.

A constructivist teacher plays a key role at the interface between curriculum and student to bring the two together in a way that is meaningful for the learner. Thus, teachers with a constructivist viewpoint can influence the understandings of their students, and plan mediating events that assist students in moving from a current understanding, which is not scientifically based to a more scientifically accepted understanding (Pritchard, 2009).

Teaching strategies using social constructivism as a frame of reference relate to teaching in contexts that might be personally meaningful to students. These also involve negotiating understanding with students through class discussion in small as well as large groups of students (Pritchard, 2009 as cited in Vygotsky, 1986).

Learning involves both the cognitive and affective domains and that the latter plays an equally important role as the former in the knowledge construction. The learner can only be motivated to engage in meaning making in mathematics only if it is of interest and value to the learner. The nature of interest and value the learner has towards mathematics leads to the development of attitudes towards the discipline. The learner is further motivated to engage in learning only if the subject matter is relevant to the

learner's daily activities. Good instruction can raise motivation for learning and motivated learners seek effective instructional environments (Cockburn, 2005).

2.2 Implication of the Theory on the Study

A constructivist assumption is that teachers should not teach in the traditional way but rather should structure reading lesson such that learners are actively involved, provide support and guidance rather than lecturing, and place emphasis on reflective teaching. They stress that social group learning and peer collaboration are useful because as learners model for and observe each other they teach and learn not only skills but also experience higher self-efficacy for learning (Schunk, 2008 p. 237-241).

Constructivists assume that knowledge is first constructed in a social context and is then appropriated and owned by the individual. Constructivists view reading as an active process through which learners discover concepts. According to the constructivists individual learners make meaning of learning through interaction with each other and with the environment in which they live (Schunk, 2008 p. 237-241). These principles are similar to those outlined in the outcomes-based system of education that also encourages group work and interaction amongst learners.

However understanding students' perspectives is essential for planning activities that are challenging and interesting. This requires that teachers ask questions, stimulate discussions, and listen to what students say. Teachers who make little effort to understand what students think fail to capitalize on the role of their experiences in learning. Rather, teachers should try to learn students' conceptions of a topic.

The constructivist stance maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experience. It also reminds teachers to look for different ways to engage individual student, develop rich environments for exploration,

prepare coherent problem sets and challenges that focus the model building effort, and elicit and communicate student perceptions and interpretations.

Learners need to be given the opportunity to search for patterns, raise questions, and construct ideas, strategies, and ways to model their worlds; and, they need to be invited to defend their thinking to others. The classroom, in a sense, becomes a workshop as learners investigate together.

The community provides an environment in which individual ideas can be expressed and tested against others' ideas. Learners share perceptions with each other and with the teacher, and their ideas become modified, selected or deselected, as common meanings develop (Pagliaro, 2013). This enables learners to become clearer and more confident about what they know and understand.

The learner, according to Cockburn (2005), should be actively involved in the learning process, not the traditional method where the instructor is to teach and the learner play a passive, receptive role. All senses should be utilized in the learning process. Another constructivist assumption is that teachers should not teach in the traditional sense of delivering instruction to a group of students. Rather, they should structure situations such that learners become actively involved with content through manipulation of materials and social interaction. Activities include observing phenomena, collecting data, generating and testing hypotheses, and working collaboratively with others. Classes visit sites outside of the classroom. The instructional implication is that teaching methods should reflect the outcomes we desire in our learners. If we are trying to teach them inquiry skills, the instruction must incorporate inquiry activities. The teacher has the role of stimulating dialogue and maintaining its momentum. In a very real way, the teacher engages groups and individuals in dialogue and supports the

development of understanding. For children to understand new information, they must become actively involved with it; that is, they need to engage with it. Encourage learners to think about and put into words the methods or approaches that they use in the course of their work mental arithmetic.

2.3 Concepts and Definitions of Reading

Reading means not only to read words. Some define reading as a conceptual and thinking process which is interpretive (Dechant, 1982). Ransom (1978, p.14-15) describes reading as “a conversation between the writer and the reader”. According to Williams (1996), reading is a process through which a reader looks at the text and understands what is written. The process of reading is active, not passive (Doff, 1997). By observing other definitions, Urquhart and Weir (1998, p.22) emphasizes that reading “is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print”.

However reading is not only a cognitive, psycho linguistic activity, but also a social activity. Reading is a complex cognitive process requiring visual, auditory and motor skills to enable a child to recognize words and symbols, to associate them with the appropriate sounds and to invest in them with meaning derived from previous experience. It has been established by Morris (1966) in Reid and Donaldson (1977) that reading achievement is related to the skill of the teacher, and that the child taught by untrained, inexperienced and unskilled teachers tend to be especially backward in reading (Reid & Donaldson, 1977, p. 62).

Furthermore according to Hengari (2007), reading is the ability to make sense of written or printed symbols. It includes word recognition, comprehension and interpretation, appreciation and application of what is read. It is an interaction with language that has

been coded into print. Reading performance, good or poor, reflects the knowledge and competencies available to the learner and how these are activated and coordinated during the reading process. Reading is a prominent element of the entire education curriculum across all subject areas beginning in the earliest grade. Children with delays in reading will experience feelings of deep inadequacy. Reading is a language process. The child being taught to read must understand the relationship between reading and his/her language. The facets of reading that teachers must consider if they are to guide children's growth in reading includes decoding print into sound and decoding a graphic representative of language into meaning (Heilman, 1977). Reading is also the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader, the text and the context of the reading situation. Typical reading difficulties of adolescents with mild disabilities include problems with vocabulary, word recognition, reading comprehension and reading rate (Feagans, 1983; Hallahan, Kauffman & Lloyd, 1985). Reading is the recognition of printed or written symbols, which serves as stimuli for the recall of meanings built up through the reader's experience (Dogbatse, 2018). According to Leipzig (2018), reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation. Reading occupies an important position in every subject of study. It is a fact that cannot be denied-that one's performance in most formal activities in Ghana is hinged upon one's ability to read and understand a print. Developing reading skills is important because success in any form of education and training depends largely on the ability to read, write and understand what has been read effectively.

Farr (1992) asserts that reading is the act of getting meaning from printed or written words. According to him, it involves recognizing letters and group of letters as symbols

that stand for sounds and these sounds form words which express ideas in primed or written form. In the view of Sekyi- Baidoo (2006), “reading is not merely a visual or physical contact with written materials or symbols. It is rather a way of decoding, interpreting, or making meaning form these symbols” (p.82). This implies that the identification of mere words is not reading. One needs to understand whatever that material is and be able to express it in his or her own way.

Florence (2017), assert that reading boosts the quality of life, reinforces and merges people together in a unifying force. Syahputra (2016) considers reading as "one of the best receptive skills in language learning concerning to get better knowledge" and as an exciting experience which leads to new experiences. From the basic tool of education, Noor claims that reading is everything related to personal satisfaction, self-discovery, it is art, source of information and most importantly an enjoyable source of knowledge for everyone. After passing all the stages, reading becomes a habit.

Kurtus (2002) opines that reading habit is a fundamental practice that can leave a positive effect on all age groups. Kurtus maintained that the acquisition of knowledge through reading is a decent approach however, it must be productive information, encourage a man to get on in a profession, pass an examination, be great at decision, or get hold of a status for learning.

Guthrie, Benneth, and McGough, (2007) express that reading is the demonstration of getting important information from printed or composed words, it is reason for learning and one of the key ingredients in regular daily existence. Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe, and Adedeji (2012) express that reading is generally connected with books as just the

composed words give a total picture of the demonstration of reading. It implies that through reading, the individual can fabricate or settle things, appreciate stories, find what others accept and create thoughtful convictions of their own. Subsequently, reading gives the way to all types of data vital to our everyday survival and development. As indicated by Ilogogie (2005) reading helps in the advancement of one's communication skills and insightfulness. Advancement through reading is more advanced inducing, enduring, compelling and helpful to humankind when held in the reading society.

According to Muogilim, (2000) reading opens door to the accumulated knowledge of centuries which helps to enrich, illuminate the minds, and widen the mental and spiritual horizon of the reader because the continuous reading of material will serve as a means of strengthening the development of reading. Sesnan (2003) cited in Mesfin (2008) stressed the significance of reading as one of the fundamental skills which everybody acknowledges is a basic tool for survival in the present-day world. Akinbola (2007) observed that the significance of reading cannot be ignored. Reading is important to literacy and it is an emancipatory apparatus that frees one from ignorance, academic infection, destitution and frustration.

Reading however, can be done in two ways, one is loudly and another one is silently. Silent reading helps to read faster, it helps to concentrate better and in processing information. (Billah, 2015). Silent reading is not only reading orally rather it is defined by Hartney (2011) as a personal, meaningfully focused activity. The advantage of silent reading is that the reader is not worried about his/her pronunciation and can read for a

purpose. Billah (2015) also points that it also helps students absorb ideas into their subconscious minds and then use them in their daily lives.

2.4 The Concept of Reading Difficulties

Lovett, Steinbach and Frijters (2000 p.335) state that a reading difficulty is an individual's failure to acquire rapid, context-free word identification skills, whilst for Shaywitz and Shaywitz (2004 p. 8) it is characterised as an unexpected obstacle in reading for children who possess the intelligence, motivation and education necessary for developing accurate and fluent reading. The term 'reading difficulties' is, in most instances, equated or used synonymously with 'reading problems', and in the context of this study reading difficulties refers to problems associated with reading, whether it be the mechanical skill of the reading process or the comprehension of what is being read.

However many young people are led to believe that success in school is beyond their reach. Learners who struggle to learn to read are often discouraged in the world of school, eventually dropping out without mastering this basic skill (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2000 p. 313). This among others spurred the researcher's curiosity of investigating the causes of and factors influencing the reading difficulties. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002 p. 342), a learner may have difficulty in perceiving visual differences between similar letter shapes, for example b/d or their specific order, for example seeing "girl" and not "girl". He/she may have difficulty in perceiving auditory differences in the sounds that these letters represent, for example that b= "b" and not "d", or their specific sound order. There might be a difficulty in finding the right sound(s) to relate to the letter(s), or in blending different sounds

together into whole words (th + i + nk + s = thinks). All the skills mentioned require adequate visual and auditory perception, as well as memory.

Information on the grammatical structure of the language needs to be understood, particularly the flow of written language and its grammar, if learners are to progress beyond reading isolated sounds or bits of words without connection to each other. Lastly, information from the meaning of the material helps the learner to recognise individual words, to put phrases and sentences together holistically and to comprehend all of what he/she is reading (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002 p. 342 & 343). When a student has difficulty with vocabulary or wider concepts and meaning, the reading progress becomes severely restricted or hampered (Donald et al., 2002 p. 343). Given the pivotal role reading plays in and out of school and the cumulative long-term cost of literacy, intervention is critical, especially at the Foundation Phase, so the educational programme has great potential as an asset for promoting the success of the nation's children. It provides a measurable return on the public's investment (Pianta, Cox & Snow 2007 p. 7).

2.5 The Concept of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language”. (Snow, 2002) Richek (1996) as cited in (Hartney, 2011) says that the purpose of reading is comprehension. For a good reader, reading is about understanding, enjoying and learning from reading materials. (Hartney, 2011). Hartney also notes that most learners with reading difficulties think that reading is recognizing words and to some, reading only means reading words orally.

Snow (2002) asserts that comprehension contains three (3) words namely:

- the reader
- the text
- the activity

He further asserts that all these elements are interconnected in a certain way that it represents “what the reader brings to read and what the reader takes from reading”. (Snow, 2002).

The reader: a reader needs to know “wide range of capacities and abilities” in order to comprehend a text (Snow, 2002). These capacities and abilities include critical analytic ability, inference, visualization, motivation, knowledge of vocabulary, discourse knowledge and comprehension strategies. The use of these strategies depend on the texts and specific activity done by the reader.

The Text: comprehension is not only about eliciting meaning from text. At the time of reading, a reader establishes different interpretations of a text which is an important part of comprehension. Nowadays text also includes electronic texts and multimedia documents.

Depending on facts such –knowledge, reader’s ability, activity, a text can be easy or can be difficult. A reader’s sphere of knowledge has connection with the context of the text in comprehension. Besides, linguistic structure, vocabulary, content, genre also have interactions with readers’ knowledge and experience.

The Activity: reading is an activity which involves purposes and process the text. With the purpose in mind, a reader does the activity of reading, for instance, a reader can read a paragraph to find specific information. Such activities can lead a reader to increase his/her knowledge level. For example, history books help a reader to enrich their history knowledge. It may have two purposes reading for enjoyment of reading for learning.

“knowledge, applications and engagement” are three effects of reading activity. (Snow, 2002).

2.6 Types of Materials Students Read

As indicated by Littlefield (2006) reading is mostly carried out on paper with ink: a book, magazine, daily paper, pamphlet, or notebook. Aside from these, different sorts of reading materials for scholarly reasons are journals, textbooks, encyclopedia, dictionaries, diaries, course readings, and handbooks. For voluntary reading, students can patronage materials like books, fictions, comic books and daily papers.

Different studies have established different materials read. For example, Annamalai and Muniandy (2013) investigate reading habit and attitude among Malaysian Polytechnic students using 119 respondents. The findings revealed that 68.9 % of the students read the newspaper every day while 57.1% enjoy reading magazines. Similarly, a study by Nomakhosazana (2002) reports that learners are most inspired by reading magazines and daily papers and as well as topics associated with love, sports, and governmental issues.

Croston (2005) reveals that the majority of students prefer reading famous magazines, to adventurous and frightful stories. With respect to the genres of selected book, the study established that the students enjoyed both the class of fiction and non- fiction. However, the most enjoyable topics are those on imagination, adventure, misery, and humour, which show to the fiction genres.

Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2014) conducted a study on reading habits among students and its effect on academic performance at Koforidua Polytechnic. Their study stated

that out of 1000 respondents, 62.0% was of the view that they read lecture notes anytime they visited the library facility, another 25.0% expressed that they read textbooks, 3.0% highlighted that they read novels while 10.0% indicated other materials. In a related study by Kavi, Tackie and Buggyeyi (2015) it is reported that out of the 87 respondents, 51.7% liked reading textbooks, 48.3% read story books while 28.7% read newspapers, followed by internet/websites 20.7%, song lyrics 20.7%, magazines 17.2% and audio books 11.5%. These reports reveal that students are more inclined to read materials directly related to their course of study like lecture notes and textbooks than reading other materials for leisure. The reasons for the choice of such reading materials could be students' desire to excel in their program of study hence their desire to find supplementary materials to what they learn in class.

2.7 Reading and Academic Performance

Academic performance of a student could be defined as the learning outcomes of the student. This includes the knowledge, skills and ideas acquired and obtained through their course of study within and outside the classroom environment (Epunam, 1999). It is the result of determination, hard work of students in academic pursuit. Pandney, (2008) defined academic achievement as the performance of the students in the subjects they study in school. This determines the students' status in class. This gives children an opportunity to develop their talents, improve their grades and prepare for future academic challenges. Academic performance refers to a person's performance in a given academic area (e.g. reading or language arts, mathematics and science amongst others). Academic performance relates to academic subjects a child studies in school and the skills the child is expected to master in each (Kathryn, 2010).

Academic performance refers to excellence in all academic discipline, in a class as well as extra-curricular activities. It includes excellence in sporting behavior, confidence, communication and reading skills and others. Steinberger (2005) posits that academic performance encompasses students' ability and performance; it is multi-dimensional; it is intricately related to human growth and cognitive, emotional and social physical development; it reflects the whole child; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and levels, through a student's life in primary school and into secondary years and working life. Academic performance refers to how well a student is accomplishing his tasks and studies. Academic performance in school is evaluated in a number of ways. For regular grading students demonstrate their knowledge by taking written and oral tests, performing presentations, submission of homework and participating in class activities and discussion. Teachers evaluate in the form of assignment, test and examination to describe how well a student has done. Poor achievement is a performance that is adjudged by the examiner and some significant others as falling below an expected standard (Adesemowo, 2005).

As indicated by Tracy and Akande (2008), reading forms part of entertainment that plays a crucial role in human development and life skills. Students with poor reading habits get poor scores in their examinations, get effortlessly distracted and eventually drop out from school. Rubin (2002) is of the view that students with poor reading habits have a higher opportunity of taking part in hostile social practices, such as delinquency, truancy, school violence, tormenting, hacking of computers and examination malpractices. While poor reading habits can be instrumental in the destruction of any individual who is tormented with it, good reading habit grows consistently and brings together a valuable personality. The acquisition of reading abilities does not just affect

or enhance confidence in language expressions, but in different subjects such as: social studies, science, arithmetic etc. A student who lacks reading ability does not do well in class activities and this deficiency is extended throughout his/her academic lifetime (Fosudo, 2010). Reading plays an invaluable role in promoting ideas and ideals, which enhance both individual development and the socio-economic development of the nation (Ike, 2000).

Palani (2012) is of the opinion that, effective reading is important avenue of effective learning and reading is interrelated with the total educational process and hence, educational success requires successful reading habit. He believes reading is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meaning with them. It requires identification and comprehension. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context. Before the advent of the television, both the young and the old found enough time to read. Apart from teachers, other professionals used to spend their leisure time in reading both English and vernacular literature. English medium schools almost always demand extra reading from their students. But all these have become a thing of the past. Palani (2012) further added that, nowadays, reading habit has lost its importance as both the young and the old are glued to the television. As far as educational institutions are concerned, coaching students for the examinations seems to be the be-all and end-all of our educational system.

2.8 Importance of Cultivating a Reading Culture

The importance of acquiring reading habits/culture to the individual and to the society cannot be overemphasized. Junius outlines the virtues of reading to include the provision of individual's welfare, social progress and international understanding, the provision of skills, knowledge and the right attitude that frees us from idleness or boredom, she points out that reading habits is not just for school but also for life, adding that when a poor reader makes no provision for achievement, he is eventually frustrated into a miserable failure. Deavers (2007) agrees in essence with the assertion by Junius by indicating that reading culture is an indispensable tool for learning in the various hierarchic of modern educational set up which opens facilitates to the learning process and effectively promotes intellectual development in the learners. In the view of Spink one needs to possess a reading habit since it is sine qua non to ensuring a full participation in modern society because it adds quality to life and provides access to culture and cultural heritage. Spink posits further that reading empowers and emancipates citizens and brings people together. Reading culture is the foundation of much of the enjoyment the individual gets out of life and is closely related to vocational efficiency. Ekmekci (1994) notes that reading provides a backup of information which reduces ignorance thus empowering and promoting literacy and communication.

According to Owusu-Acheaw (2014), the cultivation of good reading habits determines the academic achievements of students to a large extent. The study argues that reading and academic achievements are interrelated and dependent on each other. Kurtus (2002) opines that reading habit is a fundamental practice that can leave a positive effect on all age groups and further stressed that, the acquisition of knowledge through

reading is a decent approach. However, it must be productive information; it must encourage a man to get on in a profession, pass an examination, be great at decision, or get hold of a status for learning.

Again, reading helps to widen one's knowledge of the universe, a reader will be in a position to make contact with others and to share their feelings and experiences (Hugen, 2009); it helps the reader to develop a clear mind to understand life and to make decision on issues. Individuals with a good reading habits are exposed to various problems in their local and national environment and how to go about solving them. In fact, reading enables readers to know how people solve problems; it provides cross-cultural understanding and peaceful co-existence among nations of the world, it also enhances brotherhood and cooperation which eventually leads to peace (Hugen, 2009).

Reading and academic achievement are essential for research workers and educationists to know that every child whether he or she is gifted, average, normal or backward etc, should be educated in his or her own way but if he or she possesses good study habits, he or she can perform well in academics and in every situation. It is the reading habits which help the learner in obtaining meaningful and desirable knowledge. Good reading habits act as a strong weapon for the students to excel in life (Bashir & Mattoo, 2012).

According to Palani (2012), reading habit is an essential and important aspect for creating a literate society in this world. It shapes the personality of individuals and it helps them to develop proper thinking methods, and creates new ideas. However, the

developments in the Mass Media, had continued to influence interest in reading (hard copy of literatures such as...) books, magazines and journals, among others.

Grabe (1991) perceives the importance of reading habit/culture from political, psychological, health and security angles. According to Grabe reading newspapers and magazines widen readers' political knowledge, become politically informed, know obligations and rights, and heighten their involvement in our political activities. Voters can make careful political choice if they have access to information through reading.

Psychologically, Guthery observes that one of the most important gifts a parent can give to a child is to enable him to love reading (Grabe, 1991). This will be a base on exposing him unto language and books for life. The time spent together with the child promotes positive attitude towards reading years later both the parent and the child will remember the books they read together as well as many emotions shared together during their reading time, this undoubtedly will enhance their relationship and the life of that child; this is a real treasure hunt with many rich prizes for the family (Grabe, 1991).

Grabe (1991) maintains that, readers enjoy healthcare delivery services without necessarily going to the hospital or consulting a doctor; reading through magazines, newspaper columns and books on medical care will guide them about health, they know the right diet to take at the right time. Reading helps to acquire rightful living and to sustain life itself; it is a cost-effective, help in better production, enjoyment of healthier environment and better economy and makes one to be self-confident.

Security wise, reading is like a telescope through which a person who is skilful can see far into the future, the information acquired through reading will facilitate readers' personal and interpersonal relationship and enables them to prevent warnings and avoid

dangers ahead, also, reading helps to avoid taking fake or expired drugs, consumption of which may result to death (Grabe, 1991).

2.9 Comprehension Errors and Students Academic Performance

Reading difficulties are the principal causes of failure in school (Carmine, Silbet & Kameenui, 1997). According to Mercer and Mercer (2001), between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of school-going learners have reading difficulties. Teachers should be in a position to identify a learner's problem including those related to reading from a holistic point of view in order to help such a learner manage academically in school (Dreikrurs, Gronwall & Peper, 1998). Lerner (2006) also notes that teachers should identify children with reading problems early and provide them with appropriate early interventions rather than practising the policy of wait and fail method (Lerner, 2006). Research conducted in Kenya highlights that learners with problems in reading English have problems in school performance in general (Chege 1999, Kirigia 1991 & Njoroge 2000). According to Kenya Institute of curriculum development, secondary education syllabus volume one (2002), the ability to read fluently is vital both in school and for life. Good reading skills will improve performance in all school subjects. Reading helps in information gathering and learning of concepts. Through reading, the learner is exposed to new vocabulary, new sentence structures and different registers. Reading also acquaints the learner with good models of language use. A good foundation of reading should be laid in Form One. This is because reading is a very important component of language learning. It will also help in the study of all other subjects.

According to Chiuri (2009), academic performance in most districts in Central Province over the last ten years has been far below the region's potential considering its strategic central position, good resource endowment and better infrastructural facilities in

learning institutions, as compared to other regions in the country. Furthermore, the academic performance of the schools in the district is far below the country's average mean grade of 6.

A study done by Runo (2010) on identification of reading difficulties and teacher oriented challenges in teaching reading to standard five in Kenya concludes that the learners who scored poorly in the wordlist and reading passage were equally poor performers academically in schools. This was in line with her conceptual framework which indicated that both internal and external factors cause reading difficulties, hence poor academic performance. She further concludes that there is need to train the school teachers on the methods of identifying reading difficulties in learners to avoid learners' continued failure in school subjects.

2.10 Teacher-Related Factors that Cause Reading Difficulties and its Effect on Teaching and Learning

According to Runo (2010) teachers face such challenges as teaching sounds, inadequate materials, and inadequate time to teach reading and mother tongue interference. However every teacher uses his/her specific way of presenting a lesson. Watson (2006) noted that no single teaching method can be the method of choice for all occasions. . What is important for every teacher is to select and use the methods appropriate for the lesson being taught. The quality of implementing reading programs is ultimately determined by the teacher's performance and effective work in the classroom situations. That is why many scholars argue that there are as many methods of teaching as there are teachers.

Traditionally, teaching in general strongly relies on teachers' exposition followed by practice of the fundamental skills. Many teachers support the idea that practice makes

perfect. Some researchers strongly contend that practice or drill alone can help students to master fundamental skills and procedures. Watson (2006) noted that teachers explain a rule on the blackboard, give some examples of the rule in operation, and then set the class many more examples and exercises to do for themselves. They also noted that teachers believe that understanding would eventually come through sufficient practice. However, research has shown that drill alone cannot even guarantee recording of the learned theories (Brahier, 2013; Johnston-Wilder, Johnston-Wilder, Pimm, & Lee, 2011).

There are a number of principles that appear frequently in any literature on effective instruction. These include a problem-oriented learning, focusing on meaning, whole-class discussion and small group-work. Effective teaching requires continuing efforts to learn and improve. Many scholars have addressed various issues relating these topics as effective methods of teaching.

Research findings support the use of small groups as part of reading instruction. This approach can result in increased student learning as measured by traditional achievement measures, as well as in other important outcomes (Watson, 2006).

Miheso (2002) argues that most studies on achievement on cooperative learning found that, there was significantly greater achievement in cooperative classes. Douglass and Kristin (2000) observes that considerable research evidence within education indicates that using small groups of various types for different classroom tasks has positive effects on student learning. Reviews of studies of the effects of cooperative learning have generally yielded positive findings.

According to Pound and Lee (2011), a classroom in which problem solving plays a central role can provide a good environment for learning to take place. When

confronted with an appropriately challenging and interesting problem, students feel the urge to solve it. Douglass and Kristin (2000) noted that investigations have consistently shown that an emphasis on teaching for meaning has positive effects on student learning, including greater retention and an increased likelihood that the ideas will be used in new situations. Similarly, it was found that focusing on the meanings gives students a strong foundation for learning new related ideas. It also helps them to know when to apply particular skills or procedures, because they see the underlying reasons that these methods work.

On the other hand, research suggests that whole-class discussion can be effective when it is used for sharing and explaining the variety of solutions by which individual students have solved problems. It allows students to see the many ways of examining a situation and the variety of appropriate and acceptable solutions (Douglass & Kristin, 2000). Some teachers believe that for a teaching method to be effective, it should contain various and balanced pedagogical approaches and activities so that students with different types of learning styles can be catered for.

2.11 School-Related Factors that Cause Reading Difficulties and its Effect on Teaching and Learning

Various studies done on the impact of school environment on teaching and learning attest to the fact that school environment plays a critical role in the teaching and learning of students in various subjects. This is because learning involves students interacting with the environment. The school environment factors influencing academic performance in Senior high schools includes physical, emotional, social, academic needs of the pupils, and availability of teaching and learning materials. A student's academic success is greatly influenced by the school that s/he attends. Some maintained that schools in the urban areas are well staffed, have good facilities. Hence these factors induce better performance in the urban than the rural areas (Miheo, 2002).

2.11.1 The School environment

Students' academic success is greatly influenced by the type of school they attend. School factors include school structure, school composition and school climate. The school that one attends is the institutional environment that sets the parameters of a students' learning experience. Considerable research has been conducted on teaching skills, climate, socioeconomic conditions, and student achievement. However depending on the environment, schools can either open or close the doors that lead to effective teaching and learning and ultimately good academic performance (Johnston-Wilder, Johnston-Wilder, Pimm, & Lee, 2011).

Smaller class sizes create more intimate settings and therefore can increase teacher-student interaction which has also been shown to have a positive effect on student success (Donovan & Green, 2014). However, school with inadequate classrooms will be forced to accommodate more students than recommended. This will exert a lot of pressure on resources such as teachers who may compromise their methodology as part

of adaptive mechanism. For example, topics that are meant to be taught practically are taught theoretically as part of adaptive mechanism by teachers due to inadequate resources to enable effective teaching. This ends up affecting students learning negatively.

Studies has shown that there were improvements in attitude among all users after a school was physically improved (Donovan & Green, 2014). Such improvements can be seen as resulting from the physical changes to the environment which then contribute to the overall learning environment experienced by everybody. Teachers need to examine the goals they have for student learning and then set out to arrange the classroom in a way that will facilitate the types of learning activities that will be most motivational for student success.

School climate is closely linked to the interpersonal relations between students and teachers. According to Frei (2008), school climate is the general atmosphere of school. Trust between students and teachers increases if the school encourages teamwork. Research shows that students who trust their teachers are more motivated and as a result perform better in school (Cowan, 2006) School policies and programs often dictate the school climate. There is evidence that more open classrooms do have some direct effect on how teachers teach, being encouraged by the policies of the school and the layout of the classroom to be more flexible and less traditional (Donovan & Green, 2014).

Furthermore, if a school is able to accomplish a feeling of safety, students can have success regardless of their family or neighborhood backgrounds (Taylor & MacKenney, 2008). In addition to that, a conducive classroom environment is a place where everybody feels comfortable and at ease. It is a place where there is mutual respect. Every successful classroom needs established rules, procedures, and

consequences. Every teacher has a different way to effectively set these up in the classroom. Classroom rules should be established early in the school year and clearly posted for students. Consequences, both negative and positive, are also made clear to students early in the school year.

It is an undeniable fact that classroom lighting, temperature and ventilation affect student's performance. In an American college, a renovated room, including soft furnishings and designed were found to be more friendly and attractive, seemed to increase student participation. Donovan and Green (2014) reported that student participation rates in discussions and in asking questions during classes were 'two times as high' compared to classes taught in traditional rooms. In their study, teachers were reported to desire more space, a good location and quiet environment as well as classrooms with windows, daylight to deliver effective lessons.

Noise annoyance, distraction, as well as revealing a general tendency for noise to be disruptive, therefore impairing performance. The research into the effect of living or learning in noisy surroundings was initially driven by concerns about exposure to chronic external noise, such as that due to aircraft or road traffic.

Donovan and Green (2014) found evidence of signs of learned helplessness due to noise. As a result, reviews of the consequences of aspects of the physical environment tend to conclude that noise are important factors in a school environment. It has been observed that teachers pausing during bursts of external noise leads to an effective reduction in teaching time which has been put as high as an 11% loss in teaching time (Domino & domino, 2006). All this evidence fuels concern that many have about internal or ambient noise levels in classrooms.

Donovan and Green (2014) rates temperature, and air quality as the most important individual elements for student achievement. In relation to student achievement it is argued that day lighting offers the most positive effect (Taylor & MacKenney, 2008) as daylight produces biological effects on the human body. However, having solely a daylight source in the classroom is not practical or possible. The authors suggest that good lighting can only be achieved by a combination of direct and indirect lighting.

Teaching and learning resources should not be limited to classrooms, laboratories, libraries, etc., but resources like playing fields are very important. Since physical activity is another very important in enhancing academic achievement. Studies have shown that physical activity can increase neural activity in the brain. Exercise specifically increases executive brain functions such as attention span and working memory (Entwistle, 2012).

2.11.2 Availability and use of teaching and learning materials

Research repeatedly shows that students gain more conceptual understanding and are more successful in demonstrating mastery of concepts when they have had a chance to concretely experience concepts using manipulatives. In addition, when students use the manipulatives, they perform better academically and have more positive attitudes toward studies (Leinenbach & Raymond, 1996 cited in Frei, 2008). However, many teachers, especially middle school and high school teachers, shy away from using manipulatives. Most teachers do not always understand how to use manipulatives effectively in order to make abstract concepts concrete and they may dread the extra time necessary to prepare, pass out, and collect the manipulatives. However, as students gain more experience using manipulatives, they will come to appreciate the practice and application that manipulatives add to their learning experience. Therefore, it is important for teachers to consider the use of manipulatives.

Appropriate use of these educational materials is equally important as the use of effective teaching methods when presenting lessons (Etsey, 2005). To gain optimal results the use of these materials should not be limited to the teacher's demonstration, but rather students must use them in meaningful ways. A significant relationship is found between the use of recommended textbooks and academic performance. According to Pound and Lee (2011), in a comprehensive review of activity based learning in kindergarten through grade eight, concluded that using manipulative materials produces greater achievement than not using them. Visual aids can produce a very stimulating and exciting environment in the classroom. In the majority of cases, visual aids are used to offer concrete examples of a process before asking the pupils to move to the abstract notion of working from memory or a textbook.

Pagliari (2013) also asserted that the provision of the needed human and material resources goes a long way to enhance academic teaching and learning. Effective teaching and learning greatly lied on the competences of its human resources as well as material resources which were needed for the impart of knowledge.

A school that has adequate instructional materials is likely to post better quality grades than a school which has poor quality physical resources. Miheso (2002) linked academic performance to state of teaching and learning resources in schools. He noted that students from schools which are seriously deprived of vital facilities performed poorly in the examinations.

However findings from studies by Pretorius and Mampuru (2007 p 41) and Makoe (2007 p. 60) attest to claims that certain schools are not well resourced with libraries and when they do exist most are without books. Learners therefore have little opportunity to read and spend most of their time in a print-poor environment. Learners

from these environments are unable to acquire reading levels similar to or on par with their peers and often feel inferior or do not perform to the expected level.

2.12 Student-Related Factors that Cause Reading Difficulties and its Effects on Teaching and Learning

Lerner (2006) argues that problems of low self-esteem and poor social relationships are carried forward into adolescence where they can develop into learned helplessness, a significant drop in their confidence to learn and succeed, low motivation to achieve, attention problems and maladaptive behavior which can affect secondary school students' performance negatively. Many of the students end up dropping out of school before the duly time and others portray chronic absenteeism.

Personal factors of students' attitude, poor concentration, poor coordination and lack motivation, due to their emotional state also delimit the performance of children academically.

2.12.1 Students attitude

Children's attitudes to both their teachers and their studies should not be underestimated when it comes to judging their ability. If a child has the potential to be brilliant, for example, but is terrified of the teacher he or she may well find it hard to perform well. Similarly, if a child has been told that a certain subject is extremely difficult and only for the very able, he or she might find it difficult to fully participate for fear of failure. Such anxieties can result in pupils resorting to alternative means to obtain correct solutions (Brahier, 2013). Others may even skip certain lessons. Poor reading skills might lead to negative attitudes towards various subject which in turn may influence how a student will learn the subject in the subsequent years of education.

A study by Watson (2006) on 11-16 year olds shows that students formed different attitudes towards reading. Students' attitude towards certain reading influences the efforts they put in understanding and practicing concepts and skills.

According to the National Research Council (2000) as cited in Akey (2006), students' beliefs about their competence and their expectations for success in school have been directly linked to their levels of engagement, as well as to emotional states that promote or interfere with their ability to be academically successful. Thus attitudes determine the effort a student is likely to put in his learning of the subject. It is therefore necessary for teachers to strive and sustain positive attitudes towards various subjects for good performance in the upper classes (Cowan, 2006).

2.12.2 Parent-related factors

It is widely recognized that if pupils are to maximize their potential from schooling they will need the full support of their parents. The environment at home is a primary socialization agent and influences a child's interest in school and aspirations for the future. The parents play diverse roles in the facilitation of teaching and learning of pupils at school. Parental involvement in education includes provision of basic needs of pupils, attending Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, making sure that students learn and oversees their assignments. A parent-child relationship is one of the most important relationships a child has. Regardless of social class, the more parents and children conversed with each other in the home, the more the pupils achieved in school (Taylor & MacKenney, 2008).

Parental involvement is a factor that may affect students' performance. Their dedication to support their child's extra-curricular activities, obligation to school's Parent Teacher

Association and their effort to understand concepts may also have some influence to their child's learning in school.

Ministry of Education's strategy for securing parental involvement was through formation of Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). These associations provide parents with information, give parents a voice and encourage parental partnerships with schools. This enables parents to visit the school to gather relevant information and establish good relationships; discuss with teachers to keep abreast of the child's progress or to discuss emergent problems.

Parenting is seen as providing housing, health, nutrition, safety needs of a child. Parents may provide the following support: skills in parent-child interactions; home conditions to support study; classrooms/events teaching at home help with homework, help with educational choices/options. Research shows that supportive and attentive parenting practices positively affect academic achievement (Miheso, 2002). In addition, high parent aspirations have been associated with increasing students' interest in education.

However Family poverty can potentially impact negatively on students' academic performance. Students whose families live in poverty often come to school without their basic needs being met. The limitations poverty places on families are likely to negatively affect students' performance in school, for example with learners from poverty stricken families not being exposed to extra leisure reading as parents might not afford to buy books. Although the students' level of poverty does not automatically determine success or failure at school, a disproportionate number from low income families are less successful in school and eventually drop out (DoE, 2008 p 28).

Sadker and Sadker (2005 p. 36), state that a learner who is hungry and tired will not learn as effectively as a well-nourished or rested one. Washington (2001 p. 217) notes

that children from homes characterized by poverty are subject to high levels of environmental stress that can affect their functioning at school and can in turn affect their performance in reading. Geske and Ozola (2008 p. 72) infer that the number of children in the family greatly influence the learner's reading level.

Parents' level of education also influences learners' reading level. For example, a learner whose parents are educated is exposed to more books at home sees parents themselves reading and also becomes motivated to read. He or she also receives guidance and support from them, unlike learners whose parents are not well educated and have little or no interest in books (Geske & Ozola, 2008 p. 72). Educational factors, such as exposure to print, opportunities to engage in literacy activities, quality of early reading instruction and opportunities for appropriate instruction, are identified as some of the factors that influence reading (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2003 p. 347).

2.13 Socio-Economic Factors

Studies have shown that there are many different and usually very complex factors affecting learners' different reading levels, some of which are beyond the school influence (Geske & Ozola, 2008 p. 72). Socio-economic factors exacerbating reading difficulties in Ghanaian African schools are: family conditions, poverty, instability, resources, teacher competence, attitude towards education, working parent/s, collaboration of parents and their young ones (DoE, 2008 p. 9, 28; Geske & Ozola, 2008 p. 72).

2.13.1 Poverty

Family poverty can potentially impact negatively on students' academic performance. Students whose families live in poverty often come to school without their basic needs being met. The limitations poverty places on families are likely to negatively affect

students' performance in school, for example with learners from poverty stricken families not being exposed to extra leisure reading as parents might not afford to buy books. Although the students' level of poverty does not automatically determine success or failure at school, a disproportionate number from low income families are less successful in school and eventually drop out (DoE, 2008 p. 28). Sadker & Sadker (2005 p. 36), state that a learner who is hungry and tired will not learn as effectively as a well-nourished or rested one. Washington (2001:217) notes that children from homes characterised by poverty are subject to high levels of environmental stress that can affect their functioning at school and can in turn affect their performance in reading. Geske and Ozola (2008 p. 72) infer that the number of children in the family greatly influence the learner's reading level.

2.13.2 Family instability

Many families experience changes, whether due to divorce, family mobility, lack of a permanent home, drug abuse, health, violence, parents who are at work most of the time, and/or parent illiteracy, but some changes in these families can be hazardous to students' emotional and physical well-being and to their progress in school (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2003 p. 319-320; DoE, 2008p. 28). Learners from these environmental backgrounds who do not get enough support and guidance from parents, who are not exposed to books and are not motivated to read, are likely to develop a positive attitude towards reading. Collaboration between parents and children in reading story books and visiting a library together at a pre-school age already positively influences their reading levels (Geske & Ozola, 2008 p. 72).

2.13.3 Resources

The findings of studies by Pretorius and Mampuru (2007 p. 41) and Makoe (2007 p. 60) attest to claims that some schools are not well resourced with libraries and when they do exist most are without books. Learners therefore have little opportunity to read and spend most of their time in a print-poor environment. Learners from these environments are unable to acquire reading levels similar to or on par with their peers and often feel inferior or do not perform to the expected level.

2.13. 4 Language factor

In some African schools, home language instruction is encouraged in the first four years of formal schooling (DoE, 2004 p. 1), however, this is not always achieved as Ghana is a multilingual country and as a result learners are taught in a language which is either a second or third language. In such instances learners are unable to use the richness and depth of their mother-tongue knowledge to enhance the reading experience and this affects reading efficiency.

Learners' level of language development is an important factor in their ability to read. Language skills are directly related to achievement at school and are divided into the following categories: vocabulary, language comprehension, correct language usage, correct sentence construction, reading and spelling. The home language education policy stipulates that learners should start learning at school in their home language until grade three. In most schools, the language of instruction changes from African languages to English, which means that more than 80% of South Africans learn in a language different from their home language (Howie, Venter & Van Staden, 2008 p. 551). Hinkel (2005 p. 566) states that for second language reading to take place the reader must have developed proficiency in that language.

2.14 The Challenges of Dealing with Students with Reading Difficulties

Research reports, according to Adler & Reed (2002 p. 4) indicate that the most critical challenge to teacher education is the limited “conceptual knowledge base” of many teachers. Teachers face increasing difficulties of being expected to deal supportively with learners whose lives are constituted by poor socio-economic conditions, who live with poverty and have to rise above the challenges of diversity and inequality whilst being held responsible and accountable for their learner’s performances in various kinds of high-stakes testing (Adler & Reed, 2002 p. 5)

According to Runo (2010) teachers faced such challenges as teaching sounds, inadequate materials, and inadequate time to teach reading and mother tongue interference. Lerner (2006) argues that problems of low self-esteem and poor social relationships are carried forward into adolescence where they can develop into learned helplessness, a significant drop in their confidence to learn and succeed, low motivation to achieve, attention problems and maladaptive behavior which can affect secondary school students’ performance negatively. Many of the students end up dropping out of school before the duly time and others portray chronic absenteeism.

Reading however is a complex process which involves eye movement, decoding, encoding and utilizing linguistic awareness (Fisher, 1981). So this complex process can create difficulties among learners and if remains untreated then can affect their reading skills. To succeed in academic life, reading skill is required and it is important for all academic purposes especially for students in schools. Regarding this, Sekara (1988 p. 121) commented that in case of tertiary education, reading is “not for pleasure but for information that has been researched, organized and documented in accordance with the rules of academic discourse”.

However reading problems stem from many causes, and is a complex process as many reading difficulties can exist (Kaluger & Kolson, 1978; Kirk et al., 1978). Bond, Tinkler and Wason (1979) provide the following general classifications of the more prevalent reading difficulties: faulty word identification and recognition, inappropriate directional habits, deficiencies in basic comprehension abilities, limited special comprehension abilities (such as inability to locate and retain specific facts), deficiencies in ability to adapt to reading needs of content fields, deficiencies in rate of comprehension and poor oral reading.

Children and adolescents who are not proficient with the form, content and function of language have reading difficulties. Form includes phonologic, morphologic and syntactic skills. Content refers to semantic, or vocabulary and the relationship among words. Function means a student's ability to use a language for pragmatic social purposes. Adams (1990), Snow, Burns and Graffins (1998) attributed phonological awareness to skillful reading through their research. Regardless of the factors related to the reading disability, there are several types of reading problems that are typically found among students. These include; problems related to reading habits; word recognition errors; comprehension errors and miscellaneous symptoms (Mercer, 1987). Smith (1988) lists several common problems experienced by some students who suffer from reading disabilities. These include; omitting letters, syllables or words; inserting extra letters, words or sounds; substituting words that look or sound similar; mispronouncing words; reversing word or syllables; transposing letters or words; repeating words or using improper inflection during oral reading.

To investigate the reasons of reading difficulties, Hartney (2011) stated that most problems of today's adolescents and adults are because of problems that might be neglected or avoided in their childhood. Reading can also be affected by reading habit

and use of digital equipment's. Studies showed that reading habit started at a young age can create a good impact on reading and it is effective for academic success too (Akarsu & Dariyemez, 2014). Findings also showed that participants were influenced by media and technology but what kind of problems they might face was not discussed in the paper.

Vocabulary, another important area of language, is related to reading habit, reading comprehension. A study by Cain (2011) showed that leisure time provides for reading can help in growing vocabulary stock which helps in better comprehension skill.

2.15 Intervention Strategies for Students with Reading Difficulties

In Cheek and Ortlieb's *School Interventions for Struggling Readers*, the authors present strategies to encourage success in struggling readers.

2.15.1 Embrace complexity

Learning the art of reading can be a difficult, discouraging task for teacher and student. It is important for the teacher to implement strategies that embrace the complexity. Teachers may have to decompose the skill. "The logic is to break down a complex, usually multistage performance into its component parts, teach each part to some level of mastery, and, after each part has been mastered, to reassemble them into a comprehensive routine" (Cheek & Ortlieb, 2013, p. 7). The teacher may have to provide scaffolding to the struggling reader in order for them to complete the task or skill (Cheek & Ortlieb, 2013). Scaffolding "allows students to engage in authentic processes before they have achieved independent mastery of them" (Cheek & Ortlieb, 2013, p. 9).

2.15.2 Foster proactive reading instruction

In order to foster proactive reading instruction, teachers must differentiate instruction, provide re-teaching, and adapt the text. Differentiated instruction. Differentiated

instruction is defined as providing content materials that match the student's reading level. "Matching the relative complexity of a text with the reading ability of a student is quite important: provide a student too difficult a text, and she/he will likely struggle and get frustrated with reading it; provide a student too easy a text, she/he may either get bored or not advance much in reading ability" (Cheek & Ortlieb, 2013, p. 28). Reteaching teachers may have to provide re-teaching for students who have not mastered skills. "Elements of effective content area instruction include having a collection of instructional strategies as well as using them logically to decide when and which should be involved in a particular instance" (Cheek & Ortlieb, 2013, p.28). Adapting the text. Teachers may have to adapt the text for students. In order to help struggling readers comprehend a piece of text, it must sometimes be adapted to a level that can be understood. The teacher can simplify vocabulary and sentences. There are websites, such as NEWSELA, which offer texts of different reading levels (McCormick & Segal, 2016).

Another way to help struggling readers is to chunk the text. "Separating a text into sections with lines or boxes makes the text seem less daunting. Similarly, inserting guiding questions in each section helps students focus better than a large set of questions placed at the end of the reading" (McCormick & Segal, 2016).

2.15.3 Motivation, engagement, and comprehension

Teachers must create lessons that provide choice and purposes for reading. Tasks should be created for students based on ability. Students must be instructed on how to self-monitor their learning. Collaboration must be present. Teaching strategies should encourage construction of meaning because the end goal is to "read to learn." When students are not engaged in what they are reading, they will not read. There are many

techniques that should be implemented in order to engage struggling readers. “Focusing on the motivation of struggling adolescent readers is critical because, while students who are motivated to read readily and autonomously enhance their reading performance and comprehension skills, unmotivated adolescents are usually reluctant to improve their reading and do not acquire the necessary skills to become proficient readers” (Macid & Kimber, 2013 p. 87). Motivating and engaging reluctant readers can be accomplished in a number of ways.

A. Student choice of Literature

Students must be given opportunities to choose what they read. “When children struggle with motivation, they often benefit from instruction in choosing books that are both engaging and appropriate and setting purposes for reading for example, to get information on a particular topic” (Leipzig, 2015). Giving students opportunities to choose tasks related to literature is important. This could consist of long term projects of their own in which they are constructing something that is interesting to them and is related to the book they are reading (Macid & Kimber, 2013). Students may choose texts from magazines, nonfiction articles, comic books, recipe books, and graphic novels. It is important to find what interests the student and provide a text that meets that need

B. Providing Literature on Reading Level

Students must be given texts that are on their reading level. Jorgenson, Klein, and Kumar (1997) reported, “Struggling readers were more likely to be engaged when the texts they were reading better matched their reading levels as compared with engagement when texts were at grade level. ”The most important activity for developing literacy is that of inducing students to read independently. Yet, when a text is difficult for children, they comprehend little, learn little, and tire quickly” (Adams,

1990). Students are going to be more engaged in their reading when they feel more confident in the vocabulary, language, and material in the text.

C. Providing Independent Reading Time

Students should be given opportunities to read independently. “Independent reading is the reading students choose to do on their own. It reflects the reader’s personal choice of the material to be read as well as the time and place to read it. Independent reading is done for information or for pleasure. No one assigns it; no one requires a report; no one checks on comprehension.” (Cullinan, 2000, p. 1) There should be set times throughout the week that are designated for independent reading time. During this time, students may read anything of choice. “Students’ reading achievement has been shown to correlate with success in school and the amount of independent reading they do” (Cullinan, 2000, p. 2).

D. Vocabulary Instruction

“Vocabulary awareness is a major key to reading comprehension because readers cannot comprehend a text without knowing what most of the words mean” (Alaraj, 2015, p. 1). When students reach intermediate grades, there is a greater need for vocabulary instruction because the texts become more challenging to read. “Vocabulary knowledge, which is a key to reading comprehension, must be a focus for every teacher in today’s increasingly diverse schools, including those in the mainstream classroom” (Alaraj, 2015, p. 1). Vocabulary instruction should be centered on the literature that is being read in class. Students should have opportunities to work with the vocabulary words. This includes writing them in sentences, acting them out, drawing picture representations of the words, and identifying closely related words. If a student knows a vocabulary word in a piece of text, he or she will feel more confidence in reading the whole text. Vocabulary instruction should be engaging to the student. Laflamme (1997)

found, “A strategy that allowed students to use new vocabulary in dramatic and written forms resulted in better retention and usage than memorization and study.”

E. Methods of Teaching Vocabulary

“Reading instruction that focuses on the growth of children’s vocabulary results in enhancing students’ abilities to infer meanings and to better comprehend what they read”(Ruply & Nichols, 2005, p. 239). Vocabulary instruction is an on-going process for children. New vocabulary is learned by experience. Struggling readers may have not have life experiences that cultivate vocabulary that meets the needs of the curriculum. Teachers must provide vocabulary during instruction. Graves (2006) identified four components that should be included in vocabulary instruction: Providing rich and varied language experiences, teaching individual words explicitly, teaching word-learning strategies, and fostering word consciousness.

It is recommended that teachers provide eight to ten new vocabulary words each week. Direct vocabulary instruction will help struggling readers who may not spend time each week independently reading (Hanson & Padua, 2011). In order to provide rich vocabulary instruction, teachers must identify potential words that will be included in the lesson. The teacher must then provide multiple activities that allow the student to be exposed to the words. Jones (2015) first gave six guidelines for creating vocabulary instruction that is successful. She first suggested having structure and organization behind the words presented. Words should not be randomly picked from a basket, but have a commonality.

This could include studying word parts, prefixes, and suffixes. Secondly, Jones recommended incorporating multisensory learning from the beginning. With each word used, illustrations and demonstrations should be introduced. Thirdly, Jones said to

model the activities first. Before any new vocabulary activity is implemented, the teacher should introduce the activity and then model the activity using a common word all students would know. The fourth guideline stated that meanings should be available with all vocabulary work. The fifth guideline emphasized the importance of keeping an ongoing list prominently posted in the room. “If the words are visible and accessible to students, they are more likely to see them, think about them, and use them” (Jones, 2015, p.1).

Finally, Jones recommended going beyond the definitions of the words. Connotations of words are a great way to look at all meanings of the words. Vocabulary Activities may include.

- Illustrate the words
- Play “quick draw”
- Play vocabulary charades
- Give credit for finding the word used in the real world
- Use the words yourself

Have students generate examples and non-examples for words

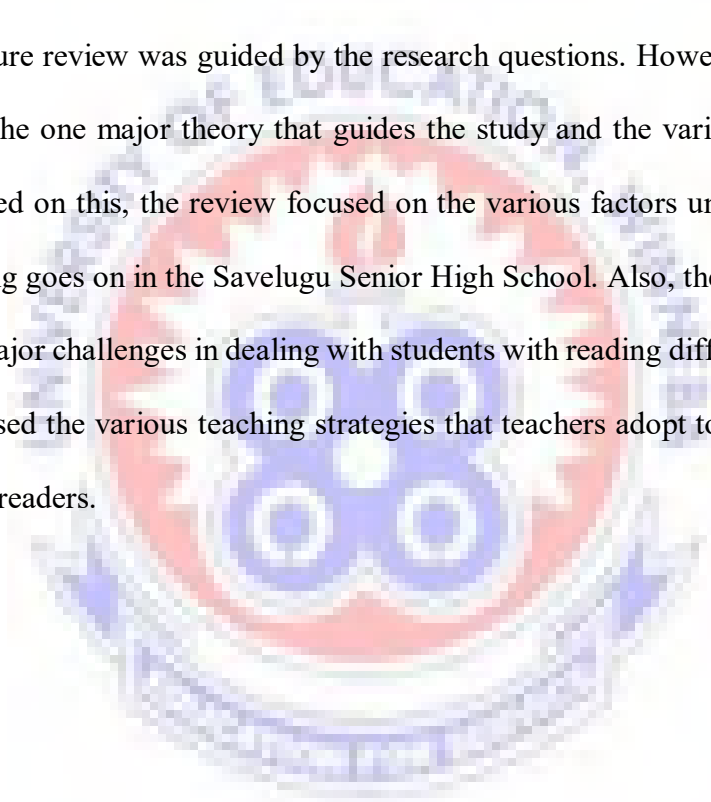
Use “fill in the blank” exercises before you expect the students to use the words in sentences themselves compose with the words (Jones, 2015)

In the article, “Four Practical Principles for Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction,” the authors introduced a model for introducing word meanings. Presenting the word in the context is the introductory action in this model. The teacher then provides a kid-friendly definition of the targeted word. Multiple examples should be presented to the student in order to fully grasp the word. Students create examples of the word and use the word. A visual image of the word is discussed. Finally, the teacher should conclude with a

thought question, which will allow the student to keep thinking about the word (Manyak et al., 2014). In this study, the researcher examined the best strategy to implement vocabulary instruction. “In 2000, the National Reading Panel identified vocabulary instruction as one of the five essential components of reading instruction, and a large body of research indicates the critical role vocabulary knowledge plays in reading comprehension” (Manyak et al., 2014).

2.16 Chapter Summary

The literature review was guided by the research questions. However, the review first looked at the one major theory that guides the study and the various concepts of the study. Based on this, the review focused on the various factors under which teaching and learning goes on in the Savelugu Senior High School. Also, the review touched on teachers major challenges in dealing with students with reading difficulties. The review again focused the various teaching strategies that teachers adopt to help them manage struggling readers.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discussed the methods adopted for the study. It discussed research design, study area, research population, target population, instruments and methods for data collection, data collection procedure, data collection approach, trustworthiness criteria, ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach

In this study, the qualitative research approach is used. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) postulates that “the process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data” (p. 4).

The adoption of qualitative research approach is as result of its effectiveness in defining less tangible facts like, religion, social norms, ethnicity, gender roles and socioeconomic standing, which are difficult to capture with statistical methods. Even though results obtained from qualitative data is applicable to characteristically similar problems, the most significant strength of this approach researchers leverage on is the opportunity to gain detailed and in-depth knowledge in a particular phenomenon. This approach offers an extensive field of enquiry into the social issue such as the one being investigated in this research. Also, it provides a clear and vivid definition of informants

within their natural habitat via interview of key informants, observation and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

3.2 Research Design

The research design is the blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data that is collected for the study. Kothari (2004) explains that the research design constitutes the sampling design (method of selecting items for observation for the study), observable design (the conditions under which the observations will be recorded as data for further analysis and judgment), statistical design (which is the specific items to be observed out of the total population) and how to measure and analyze those data. Decisions regarding what, where, when, how much, by what means concerning an inquiry or a research study constitute a research design. The research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It is a plan that specifies the sources and types of information relevant to the research problem. It is a strategy specifying which approach will be used for gathering and analyzing the data. It also includes the time and cost budgets since most studies are done under these two constraints (Kothari 2004).

Furthermore, Burns and Grove (2003), define a research design as a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. Amedahe (2002), noted that in every research study, the choice of a particular research design must be appropriate to the subject under investigation, and that the various designs in research have specific advantages and disadvantages. Kothari (2004), noted that different research designs can be conveniently described if we categorize them as (1) research design in case of exploratory research studies; (2)

research design in case of descriptive and diagnostic research studies, and (3) research design in case of hypothesis- testing research studies.

According to Amedahe (2000), some examples of research design are survey, case study, quasi- experimental and action research or experimental. Kothari (2004), further noted that research designs are appropriate for a particular research problem, and usually involves the consideration of the following factors:

The means of obtaining information, the availability and skills of the researcher, the objective of the problem under study, the nature of the problem to be studied, the availability of time and money for the research work. He further asserted that, if the research study happens to be exploratory or a formulative one, wherein the major emphasis is on discovery of ideas and insights, the research design most appropriate must be flexible enough to permit the consideration of many different aspects of the phenomenon under study. But when the purpose of the study is accurate, the description of a situation or an association between variables (or in what is called the descriptive studies) accuracy becomes a major consideration and a research design which minimizes bias and maximizes the reliability of the evidence collected is considered a good design. Examples of qualitative designs are: narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory, and ethnography and case studies. These concept are discussed further and the one selected for the study is indicated.

Narrative research is a design of inquiry from the humanities in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives (Riessman, 2008). This information is often retold by the researcher into a narrative chronology. Often, in the end, the narrative combines views from the participant's life with those of the researcher's life in a collaborative narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Grounded Theory is a design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants.

Case study design was employed to examine the role that teachers play in handling students with reading difficulties in Savelugu Senior High School. Creswell (2014) explains a case study as: “a qualitative design, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time”.

3.3 The Study Area

The study was carried out in the Savelugu Senior High School. Singleton (1993) noted that the ideal setting for any study should be easily accessible to the researcher and should be that which permits instant rapport with the informants. Savelugu Senior High School was easily accessible to the researcher.

3.4 Target Population

According to Fraenkel and Waller (2000), population refers to the total set of individuals (subject or events) with familiar features. Best and Kahn (2006), reiterated that a population has one or more characteristics that is of interest to a researcher. Creswell (2009) added that a target population is a group which the researcher is interested in gaining information upon which generalization and conclusions can be drawn subsequently. Bryman and Bell (2015) define population of a study to encompass the total number of units of a situation under study that exist in the area of investigation, which is all possible observations of the same class that a sample is acquired from. Based on the definitions, the target population for this study consists of all English language teachers within the Savelugu Senior High School.

3.5 The Case Site and Selection of Participants

The researcher used the purposively selected the school and respondents for the study. The researcher had to select a school which is available and willing to partake in the study. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) purposive sampling provides the research information from those who have the relevant knowledge and are willing to participate in the research. The purposive sampling technique was used to select teachers to participate in the study.

In qualitative studies, sampling continues until information redundancy or saturation occurs. This is the point at which no new information is emerging in the data. It is therefore critical that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously so that the researcher will know when the saturation point is reached (Berg & Lune (2004). The researcher was therefore minded by this phenomenon and purposively involved 8 (eight) teachers from the school for the study.

3.6 Instrumentation

In research, there are numerous methods used to collect data. “The methods (or sources of data) available to qualitative researchers include: structured, semi-structured, unstructured interviews and focus group discussions; structured and unstructured observations; documentary and archives sources; letters and dairies” (Kusi, 2012, p. 40).

According to Kusi (2012), semi-structured instruments are flexible to a greater extent. They offer interviewees the opportunities to express their views, feelings and experiences freely. It offers interviewers the freedom to divert from the items/questions in the schedule to seek clarifications (using probes) during the interview process.

According to Creswell (2014), “the more open-ended the question, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings. Often these subjected views are negotiated socially and historically. They are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (p. 9). Data were collected through the use of personal interviews with pre-designed interview guide.

3.7 Trustworthiness Criteria

Trustworthiness is one of the criteria used in determining quality in qualitative research. The trustworthiness criteria is located within the interpretive-qualitative framework. Elements of the criteria include credibility or authenticity, transferability or fittingness, dependability or consistency, and conformability (Kusi, 2012).

According to Kusi (2012), transferability of qualitative research is equivalent to generalizability of findings in quantitative research. The findings in this study can possibly be applied by individuals to their contexts should they find sufficient

similarities between their contexts and the findings of this study. Dependability or consistency of qualitative research findings corresponds to reliability of findings in quantitative research (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Kusi: 103).

3.8 Validity of the Instrument

Validity is about the believability of the research instrument. It helps verify whether the research is truly evaluating what it purports to evaluate. Burns (1999, p. 160), posits that validity is an essential criterion for evaluating the quality and acceptability of research. Also, Ary et al (2002), argue that validity is the most important consideration in developing and evaluation of measuring instruments. In the view of Seidu (2012), validity measures the extent to which the research procedures serve the uses for which they were intended.

3.8.1 Face validity

In this case study, face validity was done where the research instruments were given to colleagues in the field to peruse and make relevant inputs. This enabled the researcher to effect the necessary corrections and adjustments to the research instruments.

3.8.2 Content validity

This is the practice whereby the research instruments and the data might be reviewed by experts in the field of research and based on their comments, obscure questions can be revised and complex items expunged. This research instruments were reviewed through supervision and unnecessary questions were duly discarded.

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Education, Winneba stating the purpose and objectives of the study and the cooperation of the research participants. The

introductory letter was copied to the Headmaster of the School to seek his approval and access to the school and teachers to facilitate the process of data collection.

The qualitative data were obtained through the use of semi-structured interviews that incorporated open-ended questions. The questions guiding the interview were developed from the review of the literature and modified according to the results of the study. Interviews were conducted solely by the researcher. They were audio-taped and were approximately 45mins long. Complete transcripts of the interviews were given to the participants to review. Any additions or changes requested by the interviewees were noted and the documents were edited accordingly.

3.10 Data Analysis Technique

The interviews were analysed qualitatively. Question by question approach was used for analysis. This involved organizing the data across all interviewees and their answers so as to identify consistencies and differences. Delmot (1994) suggest that the researcher read and re-read participants interview scripts, field notes, diaries and listened to recorded interview to draw out both recurrent and patterns and instances that run contrary to those patterns.

The researcher then identified the themes or categories in the data. Burns (2006) suggests that, in order to generate findings that transform raw data into new knowledge, the researcher must be able to engage in the analysis of data collection, and this is through identification of themes. The researcher then codes the data according to identified themes which was the process of classifying and categorizing data into themes, issues, topics or concepts. The researcher described each theme and used quotations from the data to support arguments and presentations.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethic is to conform to the standard of conducts of a given profession or group. Ethics are the obligations of researchers to all stakeholders of their undertaking, especially the participants. Consideration was given to ethical issues in the course of conducting this research. Research is only made possible by the data contributed by respondents. In view of this an introduction letter was sought and presented to the school under study, indicating that the researcher was undertaking research in the school as part of the requirement of obtaining a Master of Education Degree from the University of Education, Winneba.

Ethical issues in educational research are those issues that are related to how the educational researchers conduct themselves or their practices and the consequences of these on the people who participate in their research (Kusi, 2012). For example, the codes may prompt researchers to consider issues of access and consent, of confidentiality and anonymity, or of risks and benefits in research, in light of recommendations based on moral principles, experience in the field, and insights from historical and ongoing debates around research ethics (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

Also, Shamo and Resnik (2005), outlined some ethical principles to be observed such as, honesty, objectivity, integrity, carefulness, openness, respect for intellectual property, confidentiality, responsible publications, responsible monitoring, respect for colleagues, social responsibility, non-discrimination, competence, legality, human subjects' protection. Thus, in this study, all the foretasted ethical guidelines were considered and respected in favour of the research participants. The researcher avoided the use of participants' names in the final research report.

3.12 Chapter Summary

The chapter described the research methodology that was used to gather data for the study. The chapter started with a description of the study design. The target population was also identified. Selection techniques and procedures were discussed as well as instrumentation and methods of data collection. Also, methods of data analysis and ethical consideration were clearly outlined.



CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings derived from the focus group discussions and the personal interviews. The participants' responses were categorized according to the research questions and themes that emerged in the process of interviewing. The presentation of the findings is organized into three sections that reflect the three main research questions

4.1 Biographic Characteristics of Interviewees

As indicated in the methodology, eight (8) participants were involved in this study. Concerning the age of the respondents, the youngest respondents were between the ages of twenty six to thirty six years (26-31) while the oldest were between the ages of forty-five to fifty-one (45-51) years old

4.2 Presentation of Data for the Research Questions

This section was divided into three parts. The first part focused on the role teachers play in aiding students with reading difficulties in Savelugu Senior High School. The second part investigates the kind of reading activities that motivates students with reading difficulties. The final part focused on the types of teaching strategies used by school teachers in managing children with reading disabilities.

4.2.1 The role teachers play in aiding students with reading difficulties in Savelugu Senior High School

Facilitating Roles

The interview data revealed that, all of the respondents indicated that it is facilitating when teachers are able to effectively inform their students of the various processes and activities required of them. The respondents highlighted that the strategies of questioning, and follow through.

One interviewee provided students with support at their level by modeling strategies, thinking for them, and helping them facilitate learning in the classroom.

Another respondents facilitated learning by pulling small groups and giving small group instruction.

One respondent commented that,

“I consider my role to be to do the best I can to bring them up in some regards to their reading level. I am not trying to make them be at grade level, I'm just trying to see growth. If, by the end of the year they are at grade level, then that is great. I will push them as much as needed in order to see growth”

Another respondent added that:

I am always willing to give my students information on the benefits of reading. Even in class, I always direct them as to what to do. I can add that they are ready to learn when we offer them assistance.

The data revealed that majority of teacher respondents initiate various strategies for their students with reading difficulties to overcome the challenge they face in reading and comprehension. This finding is consistent with literature by Hmelo-Silver and Barrows (2006) when they stated that a teacher facilitator guides students in the learning process, pushing them to think deeply, and models the kinds of questions that students need to be asking themselves, thus forming a cognitive apprenticeship. This finding further supports the constructivist view by Pritchard (2009) when he asserted that

teachers can influence the understandings of their students, and plan mediating events that assist students in moving from a current understanding to a more accepted understanding.

Motivating Role

With reference to the focus group discussion and the interview data, it was revealed that most participants considered themselves motivators in the classroom to help students with reading difficulties. One respondent commented that

“I think my biggest role is to help them gain confidence in themselves and to help students understand strategies that they can use to help them become better readers”.

Another respondent commented that:

“Even though I put my students right when I find them making mistakes. I correct them and quickly make them do the right”

The above comments show that some teachers help their struggling readers to be self-motivated to become proficient readers. This finding affirms the constructivist view and further supports literature by Carol Denton (2016) when he stated that powerful instruction includes the following: teaching skills, strategies, concepts, providing differentiated instruction for all learners, providing explicit and systematic instruction, giving opportunities for application, and measuring student progress.

4.2.2 The kinds of reading activities that motivate students with reading difficulties

Teachers have many strategies that are implemented in the classroom to help motivate struggling readers. The researcher asked the participants to describe the best teaching they adopt to help their students with reading difficulties. Three strategies were identified after analyzing the data collected. The activities that are used by the teachers

to help motivate students with reading difficulties are giving ample time for individual reading, small groups activities and the use of multiple skills on one text.

Giving students ample time

As part of the responses gathered on how reading time motivates struggling learners to read, it was reported that providing ample reading time for students is vital in motivating students.

One respondents commented that:

“The more the student practices, the better they become, and so I ensure they read a lot in my class. I also encourage reading among my students as a way of not only boosting their self-confidence, but also helping them to grow”

Another respondent commented that

a lot of reading practice is the most important strategy to implement especially students who struggle with fluency in reading .

The above data means that if a student is engaged in the topic he/she is reading, he will be more inclined to read again.

The data presented above reveal that teachers do give opportunities for students to read independently. This finding confirms Hurst (2013) when he stated that a student feels capable, in control of their learning, has an interest in their reading, and feels connected to the text or story, the student will have motivation. Reading materials could include magazines, news articles, comic books.

Small group activities

Three of the eight respondents reported that implementing small groups into reading instruction motivates students with reading difficulties One of the respondents said that

“small groups allow students to communicate with peers about the text”

Another respondent commented that

Sometimes I put some of my students together with their superiors from higher classes to read and then discuss the text after reading. This strategy allows me to observe student reading throughout the classroom.

The data above shows that teachers incorporated small groups into instruction and encouraged communication among students. This finding supports Koskinen and Blum (1986) when they asserted that communication could lead to questions, debate, deep questioning, and discussion. Small groups also lead to differentiation in the classroom. Students can read to one another. Reading with a peer motivates struggling readers to read a text that might be a little higher than the normal text they read. This finding further supports the constructivist view that learners construct meaning through interactions with others, with materials, and by observation and exploration of events.

Multiple Skills on Text

Six of the teachers encouraged practicing multiple reading skills using only one text.

One respondent commented,

“In addition, using one text/passage/story for a variety of reading, writing, and language skills can be helpful. Since some of my students readers often have difficulty with comprehension, using one text to practice a variety of skills can help them learn without having the struggle through text after text”

This finding shows that teachers adopt and implement certain strategies to motivate their students with reading difficulties by providing ample time for their students to read frequently, by putting their students in small groups and they are made to read and familiarize themselves with one text or passage over and over again. This finding supports literature by Denton (2016) when he stated that during instruction, one text can be used to address multiple skills. Struggling readers get frustrated when they finally master one text and then have to move to another text to work with another skill. Multiple skills on one text can be used to address mini standards during a classroom

session. Struggling readers will find motivation if they are already familiar with the text. This finding affirms the constructivists theory as Schunk (2008) asserted that teachers should not teach in the traditional way but rather should structure reading lessons such that learners are actively involved, provide support and guidance rather than lecturing, and place emphasis on reflective teaching. They stress that social group learning and peer collaboration are useful because as learners model for and observe each other they teach and learn not only skills but also experience higher self-efficacy for learning.

4.2.3 The types of teaching strategies used by teachers in managing students with reading difficulties

There are many strategies that can be implemented in the classroom in order to engage and motivate struggling readers. Some of the strategies used by the teachers from the data collected are presented as responses to the third research question. These are the use of games, group work, high interest texts, plays and poetry.

Games.

One Respondent commented that:

“The students enjoy games and activities such as highlighters, colored pens, and highlighting tape”.

Another respondent commented:

“Games and activities which they don’t feel like they are just reading a text”

Another respondent commented:

interactive games and websites engage the struggling reader.

Another respondent commented:

“Any type of game they find exciting. If I can make something into a competition, they love that, and I find that they are more engaged into the lesson”

The data presented above shows that the teachers use games to positively impact struggling readers.

Group work

Group work was mentioned as a strategy of encouraging struggling readers

One participant commented that:

Group work encouraged struggling readers by actively engaging them.

Another respondent used partner work and small group work with the teacher in order to engage the struggling readers. Opportunities to confer with others are some of the opportunities that are implemented in the classroom.

High Interest Texts

One respondent mentioned that high interest texts engage the struggling reader.

Struggling readers must have books that interest them and are relevant to their age.

Another respondent offered high interest text to struggling readers in order to get them onboard with reading.

Plays and Poetry

The interview revealed that some of the teachers use plays and poetry to engage students with reading difficulties. One Respondent said that plays and poetry engage struggling readers when he commented that:

“students create their own plays and poetry based on the stories and text read in the classroom. When students create poems and plays based on what he or she read, that is a higher level of thinking and understanding”.

The data above shows that teacher respondents involved in the study use four major strategies namely games, group work, high interest text as well as plays and poetry to help students with reading difficulties improve on their reading. This finding confirms literature by Walther (2014) when he stated that poetry can engage struggling readers because it is short, contains rich vocabulary, boosts comprehension, creates interest in a topic, and sparks enthusiasm for writing. The finding further supports Wilson et al (2012) indicated that active responses during small-group reading instruction increase student engagement and motivation to participate.

The above finding supports the constructivist theory. Schunk (2008) asserted that individual learners make meaning of learning through interaction with each other and with the environment in which they live.

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter entailed a detailed discussion on the results of the study. The main theme were identified and discussed. The interpretation of the findings was also done. The next chapter will discuss the conclusions that were drawn from the findings of the study followed by recommendations and the summary of the study and suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the summary of the research findings, conclusions, recommendations, suggestions and the way forward based on the findings. This final chapter provides a brief overview of the study and shows how the research questions and objectives set out in chapter one have been comprehensively dealt with. It also discusses the recommendations for practice and new areas for further research.

5.1 Key Findings of the Study

The study investigated the role that teachers at Savelugu Senior High School play in handling the reading difficulties of students. Semi-structured interview guide was used for the data collection since the study employed the qualitative approach to the research. Data were collected from eight (8) teacher respondents. The first research question examined the role that teachers play in aiding students with reading difficulties in Savelugu Senior High School. The study revealed that various teachers played motivating and facilitating roles to help their students who are struggling with reading difficulties to overcome the challenges they face.

The second research question was to find out the kind of reading activities teachers adopt to motivate students with reading difficulties to engage in reading. The study revealed that provision of ample time by teachers for their students to read frequently, putting their students in small groups and familiarizing their students with one text or passage over and over again goes a long way in helping struggling readers to deal with reading difficulties.

The third and final research question was to uncover the types of teaching strategies used by school teachers in managing learners with reading difficulties. The study revealed that teachers use four major strategies namely; games, group work, high interest text as well as plays and poetry to help their students to overcome the challenge they face with reading.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn. The teachers confirm that there are learners with various levels of difficulty in reading at Savelugu Senior High School. These learners are assisted by their teachers in various ways to help them overcome their reading difficulties. There seem to be no parental involvement in the academic development of the students with reference to the difficulties they have in reading. The nature of reading difficulties are sometimes not identified so that effective methods are used to help affected learners to be able to read well. There is lack of provision of sufficient and relevant reading materials to the students as teachers have to provide students with a variety of reading materials.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were outlined below:

1. More workshops solely focusing on reading difficulties among school learners should be conducted by the Ministry of Education, to train teachers to cope with teaching reading effectively.
2. The Ministry of Education should organize workshops to help teachers with English Language proficiency and to equip them with remedial skills which should enable them to deal with learners with reading difficulties.

3. The Ministry of Education should organize workshops or programmes for both teachers and parents, to create and shared understanding of expectations concerning parental involvement in their children's education.
4. The Ministry of Education should provide enough reading materials to schools, to help the teachers to have enough resources which would enable them to prepare suitable reading lessons.
5. Parents should be encouraged by teachers to send their children to kindergartens and pre-schools before they enter primary school. This will reduce the high number of learners entering junior high and senior high schools with limited proficiency and reading skills in the English Language.
6. In an attempt to assist students to improve performance, it is important that stakeholders give adequate research considerations to students' reading habits.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations of the present research. The study is limited to one senior high school and does not provide room for comparison. In the collection of data for the research for instance, it was realized that most teachers of the schools were shy or reluctant to be interviewed since most of them have not been exposed to taking part in studies like this research. This initially proved a great challenge to the success of the work until after further assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Research

The purpose of the study was to examine the role that teachers play in dealing with the reading difficulties among the students of Savelugu Senior High School. This study used a single case study and a qualitative method. Future researchers could use the quantitative design and involve more than one senior high school in order to make accurate comparisons.



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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES

Interview Guide for Teachers

General information about Research

I am a Master of Arts (MA) Student of the above institution who will like to seek your views on examining the roles that teachers play in handling student with reading difficulties.

1. How old are you?
2. Please are you married?
3. How do you identify a reader with difficulty?
4. To the best of your knowledge, are you able to complete the curriculum for each term?
5. Would you recommend pupils with reading difficulties in your school to engage the service of private teachers?
6. What reasons can be attributed to the reading difficulties some students face in your school?
7. What grouping strategies do you find most beneficial to your struggling readers?
8. During reading instruction, when do you incorporate groups?
9. What types of vocabulary instruction do you provide for your struggling readers?
10. What comprehension strategies are most effective for your struggling readers?
11. How do you measure comprehension in your classroom?
12. What do you think the best teaching strategy is for struggling readers?
13. What is your role in helping students with reading difficulty?